

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCSE-00 SCA-01 DHA-02 L-03 H-02 SSO-00

NSCE-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 INRE-00

SCCT-01 /047 W

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O 070136Z AUG 75

FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 834

UNCLAS TEGUCIGALPA 3394

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS PINT, CDES, HO (CYPHER, MICHAEL J)

SUBJECT: GOH REPORT ON CYPHER DETENTION AND MURDER

REF: (A) STATE 176281, (B) STATE 181793

SUMMARY: A TRANSLATION OF THE NOTE CONTAINING THE GOH RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S REQUEST FOR A FULL REPORT ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF FR. CYPHER'S DEATH IS TRANSMITTED HERIN. NO ACTION REQUESTED 7  
END SUMMARY.

1. THE FOLLOWING IS AN UNOFFICIAL TRANSLATION OF THE DIPLOMATIC NOTE RECEIVED TODAY AT 16:20 LOCAL TIME IN RESPONSE TO THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH CHIEF OF STATE MELGAR AUGUST 2 PURSUANT TO INSTRUCTIONS IN REFTTEL (A):

2. QUOTE: IN ACCORDANCE WITH OUR CONVERSATION OF YESTERDAY I HAVE THE

HONOR TO ADDRESS YOUR EXCELLENCY IN REFERENCE TO THE SAD EVENTS OCCURED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF OLANCHO OF 25 AND 26 OF LAST JUNE WHICH CULMINATED IN THE TRAGIC DEATHS OF VARIOUS PERSONS, AMONG WHOM WAS THE PRIEST JEROME ZYPHER (SIC) OF NORTH AMERICAN NATIONALITY. AS YOUR EXCELLENCY SHOULD KNOW THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC ON JULY 9 DESIGNATED A HIGH LEVEL MILITARY COMMISION WITH AMPLE POWERS TO REALIZE RR SITU#ALL THE INVESTIGATIONS CONSIDERED NECESSARY TO CLARIFY THE FATE OF THOSE WHO, AT THAT TIME, HAD  
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DISAPPEARED IN OLANCHO. THIS WORK COMPLETED, THE MENTIONED

COMMISSION PRESENTED A LONG AND DETAILED REPORT OVER WHAT HAD OCCURRED, WHICH WAS AMPLIFIED BY THE PRESS AND RADIO. IN ATTENTION TO THE DESIRE OF YOUR EXCELLENCY TO KNOW SPECIFICALLY THE FATE BEFALLEN FATHER CYPHER, FROM HIS CAPTURE UNTIL HIS DEATH, BASED ON THE CITED REPORT I INFORM YOU OF THE FOLLOWING: THE PRIEST JEROME CYPHER WAS CAPTURED AT 10:00 A.M. ON THE 25TH THIS YEAR, BY AGENTS OF THE AUTHORITIES IN THE INTERIOR AND THE

CENTER "SANTA CLARA" LOCATED IN THE CITY OF JUTICALPA, DEPARTMENT OF OLANCHO, TOGETHER WITH LEADERS AND ACTIVISTS OF THE NATIONAL UNION OF CAMPESINOS (UNC), FOLLOWING AN EXCHANGE OF SHOTS, WHICH ON THAT DATE TOOK PLACE IN SAID CENTER. IMMEDIATELY AFTERWARDS HE WAS TAKEN TO THE JAIL OF THAT CITY.

THAT SAME DAY AT APPROXIMATELY 22:30 HOURS HE WAS TAKEN IN HIS UNDER-CLOTHES AND WITH HIS HANDSTIED, WITH OTHER PERSONS, IN A RED PICK-UP VEHICLE, PROPERTY OF SERGEANT DAVID ARTICA TABLANDA, CHIEF OF THE JAIL IN JUTICALPA.

MAJOR JOSE ENRIQUE CHINCHILLA, CHIEF OF THE MILITARY DETACHMENT HEADQUARTERED IN JUTICALPA, ORGANIZED A CONVOY DIRECTED TOWARD THE VALLEY OF LEPAGUARE, WHERE THEY ARRIVED AT APPROXIMATELY 01:30. TO THIS CONVOY WERE ADDED THE CIVILIANS JOSE MANUEL ZELAYA AND CARLOS BAHR, HEADING FOR THE RANCH "LOS HORCONES" PROPERTY OF THE FORMER. THIS RANCH HAD BEEN OCCUPIED THE DAY BEFORE BY A PLATOON UNDER THE COMMAND OF 2ND LT. BENJAMIN PLATA, WITH THE AUTHORIZATION OF THE OWNER JOSE MANUEL ZELAYA. AT 01:30 SIC HOURS MAJOR JOSE ENRIQUE CHINCHILLA ORDERED AGENTS OF THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATION (DIN) TO INTERROGATE, AMONG OTHERS, FATHER JEROME ZYPHER, WHO WAS SUBSEQUENTLY MURDERED, EMPLOYING FOR THIS A 22 MAGNUM RIFLE PROPERTY OF JOSE MANUEL ZELAYA. THE HIGH LEVEL MILITARY COMMISSION WHICH INVESTIGATED THESE ACTIONS, DID NOT OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT WAS SAID BY FATHER ZYPHER.

THE ACT COMPLETED, THE RELIGIOUS ZYPHER WAS TAKEN OUT AND PLACED WITH OTHER VICTIMS IN A PICK-UP, PROPERTY OF ZELAYA, WHICH WAS DRIVEN TO A SITE SOME 1,000 METERS FROM THE HOUSE WHERE THERE WAS A WATER WELL WITH AN APPROXIMATE DEPTH OF 40 METERS BY ONE IN DIAMETER. 2ND LT. BENJAMIN PLATA PROCEEDED TO PLACE TWO CHARGES OF DYNAMITE, WHICH DID NOT HAVE THE DESIRED EFFECT OF SEALING THE WELL, FOR WHICH REASON THEY FINISHED BY FILLING IT IN WITH DIRT.

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ON 17 JULY THE HIGH LEVEL MILITARY COMMISSION INFORMED THAT BY 15:30 HOURS ON THAT DAY THEY HAD RECOVERED SEVEN BODIES, AMONG WHICH WAS FOUND THAT OF THE PRIEST JEROME ZYPHER. THE BODIES WERE FOUND IN A COMPLETE STATE OF DECOMPOSITION AND PARTIALLY DISFIGURED, BUT PART OF THE REMAINS AND SOME PERSONAL ITEMS PERMITTED THE IDENTIFICATION OF FIVE OF THEM.

THE HIGH LEVEL MILITARY COMMISSION FOUND MAJOR JOSE ENRIQUE CHINCHILLA DIAS, 2ND LT. BENJAMIN RODOLFO PLATA, MANUEL

ZELAYA AND CARLOS BAHR DIRECTY RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATH OF FATHER ZYPHER AND OTHER PERSONS, AND THEY HAVE BEEN BROUGHT BEFORE THE COMPETENT COURTS OF COMMON JUSTICE TOGETHER WITH OTHER PERSONS CONSIDERED TO BE LINKED TO THE EVENTS OF OLANCHO. ON 17 JULY TMS HIGH LEVEL MILITARY COMMISSION ANNOUNCED THAT THE REMAINS OF FATHER ZYPHER WOULD BE DELIVERED TO THE CONSUL GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES IN HONDURAS FOR SHIPMENT AND DELIVERY TO HIS RELATIVES IN THAT NATION, BUT IN ACCORDANCE WITH A DECISION

REACHED BY HIS RELATIVES IN THE UNITED STATES AND TRANSMITTED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF HONDURAS BY THE NORTH AMERICAN CONSUL CLYDE W. SNIDER (SIC), THE BODY OF FATHER ZYPHER WAS BURIED IN THE MINICIPALITY OF GUALACO, DEPARTMENT OF OLANCHO, WHERE HE WORKED IN HIS APOSTOLIC MISSION.

THIS ISOLATED ACTION WAS THE RESULT OF THE INTERVENTION OF CIVIL ELEMENTS ADVERSE TO THE PEASANTS' MOVEMENTS, WHO, GAINING THE COMPLICITY OF MILITARY AUTHORITIES IN OLANCHO, WANTED TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE SITUATION TO THEIR OWN BENIFIT.

THE SUPERIOR COUNCIL OF THE ARMED FORCES HAS MADE IT IRREFUTABLY CLEAR THAT NEITHER THE CHIEF OF STATE NOR THE HIGH COMMAND OF THE ARMED FORCES, AT ANY MOMENT, HAD KNOWLEDGE OF THE PROJECTED ACTION, NO, MUCH LESS, GAVE INSTRUCTIONS TO ACT AGAINST THE LIFE AND PHYSICAL SECURITY OF THE PERSONS INVOLVED IN THE PEASANT' ACTIVITIES, EVEN WHEN SOME OF THESE CLOAKED CHARACTERISTICSOF A REAL INSURRECTION.

IT IS REGRETTABLE THAT THIS TYPE OF CRIME, ATTRIBUTABLE TO PERSONS ACTING ON THEIR OWN INITIATIVE, AS YOUR EXCELLENCY WELL KNOWS, CAN HAVE THE INFLUENCE TO TARNISH THE SPOTLESS HISTORY OF AN ARMY, AND OF EVEN AN ENTIRE NATION.

IT IS THE HOPE OF MY GOVERNMENT THAT THIS HORRIBLE CRIME PERPETRATED AGAINST FATHER ZYPHER, WHICH WE ARE THE FIRST TO REPUDIATE AND CONDEMN, WILL NOT AFFECT THE MAGNIFICENT RELATIONS WHICH TRADITIONALLY AND FORTUNATELY HAVE UNITED  
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OUR TWO COUNTRIES.

I TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY TO REITERATE TO YOUR EXCELLENCY THE TESTIMONY OF MY HIGHEST AND MOST DISTINGUISHED CONSIDERATION. (S) VIRILIO R. GALVEZ., MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS. UNQUOTE.  
SANCHEZ

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED.

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